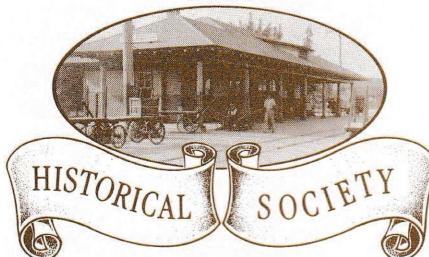


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CHRISTIAN COLONY & BRUELLA SCHOOL

by Ralph Lea & Janice Roth



Christian Colony Church of 1906 on the northwest corner of Acampo and Bruella Roads.

Insets: The 98-year old church, minus bell towers, is now a family home with shade area added. Ralph Lea and John Wright in photos.

Inset photos courtesy of Norma Reeves



▲ A peach drying operation in the Acampo area.

The idea for a Christian Colony in the Lodi-Acampo area was a dream of J.P. Dargitz and S.S. Murphy. It would be a place "where good people in good homes could reside in the midst of fruit bearing orchards." This plan was able to come to fruition because of the foresight of pioneer farmer B. F. Langford who planted almonds and fruit trees on rich farming ground. Dargitz, minister and land agent, along with Murphy were hired to sell Langford's land and at the same time would realize their dream of a Christian Colony.

The story starts with the birth of Benjamin F. Langford on December 27, 1829. He came to central California in May of 1850 and purchased land in Elliott Township just north of the Mokelumne River and built a home near Staples Ferry.

In the fall of 1851 Langford built a sawmill a mile and a half below his home and started cutting his own oak trees and floating timber from the mountains. After operating the mill for a few years he sold the machinery to Judge Terry. The machinery was transported to Terry's Gristmill at Clements.

In 1879 Mr. Langford was elected to the California State Senate where he



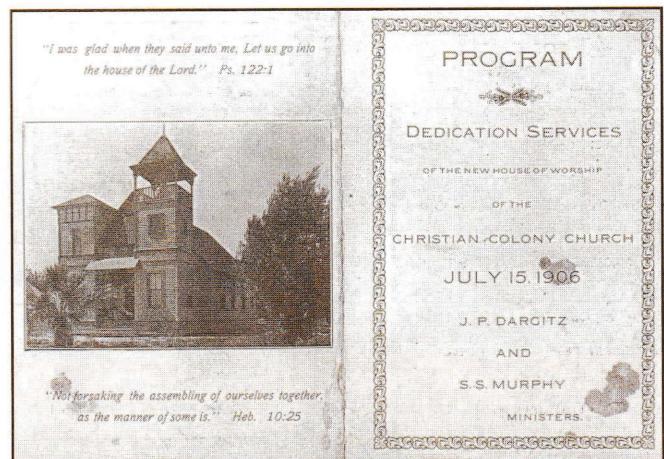
▲ In 1902 the Langford Orchard became the Christian Colony. B.F. Langford married Catherine Kane of Woodbridge in 1870. Lena and Frieda Kane, Catherine's sisters are shown above with dogs.

served four straight terms. In 1882, he was a prime mover and one of the owners of the San Joaquin & Sierra Nevada Railroad which ran from the Delta through Lodi and into Valley Springs.

In 1887, Langford went from raising wheat to growing fruit trees including peaches,

apricots, prunes and almonds on his block of 320 acres. About one half of the almond trees were later grafted with sugar or giant plums. The next year B.F. Langford helped establish the first Bank of Lodi and became its first president.

In the early part of 1900 the many acres of the Langford property were sold. One of the Stockton banks was in charge and in turn hired Dr. J. P. Dargitz of Acampo, California to act as an agent to sell the parcels. Dargitz was president and S.S. Murphy was secretary of the Acampo Christian Colony Co. The land was subdivided into ten acre parcels and was



known as Christian Colony #1. It was located four miles east of the town of Acampo on both sides of Acampo Road and the intersection of the county road (which later became Bruella Road). Starting in June of 1904, Dargitz and Murphy ran full-page ads in the National Christian Philanthropist Magazine published by the Christian Church.

There were 46 parcels of approximately 10 acres each in the north orchard and 32 parcels in the south orchard totaling 800 acres. The ad encouraged prospective buyers to come to live in a community that was made up of Christians. Purchase price for the parcels ranged from \$1,400 to \$1,858 with the lower price being for the acreage with almond trees and the higher price for the land with plum trees. The land could be purchased for a down payment of \$300-\$500 in cash with the balance payable over 3-8 years at a rate of 6% interest. The ad also informed the reader that a comfortable cottage of 3-4 rooms could be built for \$400 and that ten acres would support a family by keeping a cow, chickens, garden and working in the orchard. It also informed them that a house of worship was to be erected



Brunswick School, located on the SE corner of Peltier and Tretheway. This building is still being used. ▲

which would include a bible school, Christian Endeavor and midweek prayer meetings.

Buyers came from Oregon, Oklahoma, Idaho, Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, Kansas, Washington and San Francisco, California.

The first people to settle in the Christian Colony had to make do with

what little they had. Windmills were used for water and there was no electricity. Horse and buggy was the main mode of transportation. The church was in Acampo about 3 miles to the west. They soon decided to build a church in their area located on a one-half acre parcel at the northwest corner of Acampo Road and what is now



Houston School Reunion. Top Row: 12 Clancy, 14 Clancy, 17 Ernest Finly. 2nd Row: 1 Hazel Pampel, 3 Susan (Jahant) Bawden, 6 Josie Wakefield, 10 Gussie (Pearson) Ing, 11 Daisy Marilla Pleas. 3rd Row: 5 Frances (Jahant) Murphy, 6 Mattie (Jahant) Eddlement, 7 Freida (Jahant) Nesbit, 8 Clancy, 12 Ella (Northrup) Hazeltine. Bottom Row: 1 Grace Arthur Adams, Elliott Adams, 3 Sussie Eddleman, Van Valkenberg, 5 Mary Lewis Hill, 6 Van Valkenberg, 7 Lois Thorn, Geo. Jahant, 9 Paul Nesbit, 11 Cora Northrup, 14 Bertha Ryan, 15 Clancy. ▲

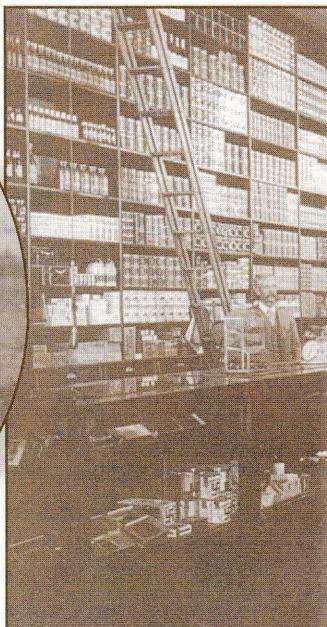
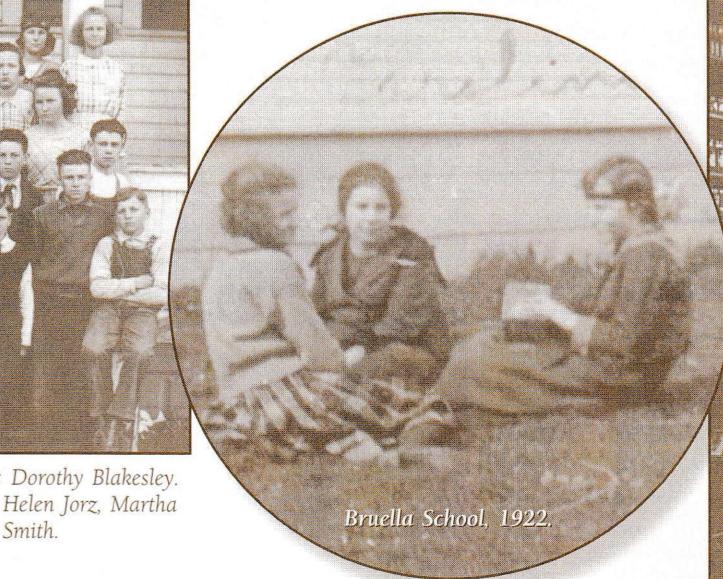


▲ Bruella School, 1921. Second from right, last row: Dorothy Blakesley. Elsewhere in the picture: Edna Elwell, Karl Jack, Helen Jorz, Martha Riemele, Mary Manassero, Carolyn Nesbit, Floyd Smith.

Bruella Road. Almost everyone donated labor and materials for the new church. It was dedicated on July 15, 1906. The cost of the building was \$1,561 with an additional \$223 paid for the organ, bell and furniture. All but \$427 was raised.

There were 80 members signed up for the new Christian Colony Church. Eighteen transferred their membership from the Acampo Church to the new church where J.P. Dargitz was the pastor. Elders were S.S. Ford, W.A. McCausland, D.F. Miller and G. Adamson. Deacons were Joseph Utterback, Earl Dargitz, E. Archer, Ira Ayers and J.A. Botts. Deaconesses were Mrs. Jennie Adamson, Mrs. Clara Dargitz, Mrs. Mary Hayes and Mollie Brown.

The colony had seven Dargitz family members, six from the Brown family plus Olive, J.W. and Ellary Stucken-



▲ The general store in Youngstown

bruck; Mary, Allice, and Miss Jennie Gillespie; Godfrey and Jennie Adamson; Mae, Alice, Henry and M. Crass; Mark and Rosa Wade; B.F. and Eleanor Stine.

Education of the children was a problem as the nearest school was Brunswick school one and a half miles east and one mile north at Tretheway and Peltier Roads or Houston School which was two and a half miles to the west. To solve the problem a two-room school, LuVella, was built in 1910 on two acres just west of the Christian Colony Church.

Life improved for the colony residents and others in the area when the C.C.T.C. Electric Railway became available one and a half miles to

the west at Youngstown. One could ride to Lodi, Stockton or Sacramento on the passenger car and shop in the new general store at the station.

In 1911, the church needed a new pastor. S.A. Nesbit offered to come for \$600 a year. The following year \$19 was spent to wire the church for electric lights. The new church board consisted of 6 elders all men, 5 brother deacons and 5 sister deaconesses according to D.F. Mailer and Earl Dargitz, Trustees.

Thirty-nine lots were sold



▲ 1920; Bruella School.



▲ 1922; The Christian Colony Library was a free library located in the old church next to Bruella School. Note the dog has his own book!



▲ Bruella



Mr. Young on the left.

but there were not enough Christian Church members to purchase all the land so the group was forced to sell to people outside the church.

On April 25, 1912, tragedy came to the colony when one of the houses burned to the ground resulting in a \$4,000 loss. In May of the same year the people of Victor and the Christian Colony Citizens met at Young's Store to protest to the county supervisors that they had been waiting five years for a



Photo courtesy of the San Joaquin County Historical Society Bruella School, 1937; lunch time in the back yard. ▲
Photo courtesy of Norma Reeve Inset: Bruella School playground now, converted to John Wright truck yard.

bridge over the Mokelumne River.

In September of 1913, Bro. Nesbit resigned as pastor and the church held a fund raising supper for Halloween. Brother Huffman became the new pastor and \$400 was pledged by members for support of the pastor. In February \$54 was paid on the pastors salary, \$5 for the Janitor and \$1.30 for lights.

Money was a large problem for the church and July 11, 1915 it was reported that receipts of \$21.90 plus \$1.74 cash on hand and bills of \$1 for lights \$5 for the janitor and \$20 for the pastor resulted in the account being overdrawn by \$2.31.

It was decided to add six feet to the parsonage. No mention was made of the cost in the minutes of the board meeting.

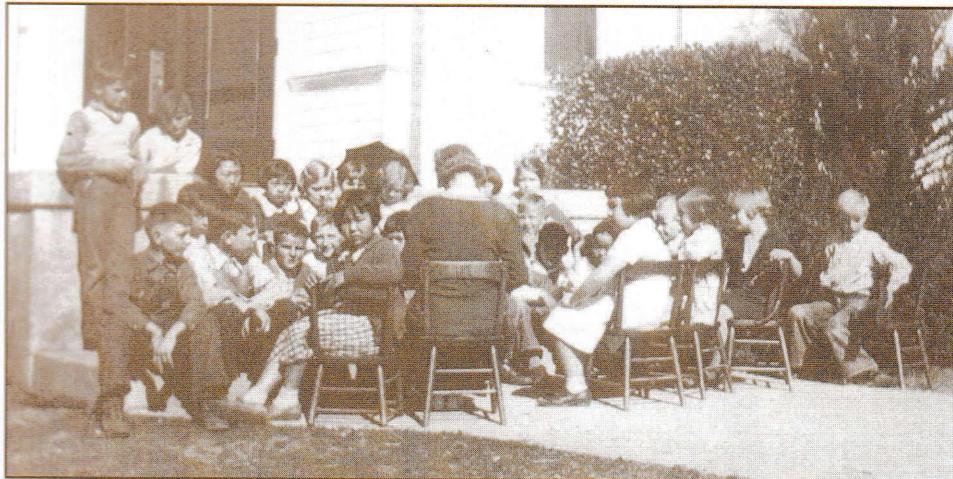
Most families now had automobiles so that they could attend church in Lodi or elsewhere.

The Christian Colony Church building, besides being used as a church until 1922, was used as a community hall where the Bruella Farm Bureau held meetings. Boy Scout Troop #28, led by church member and scoutmaster Mark Wade, also met there from 1920-1940 and then moved to Houston School and became Troop #228.

In 1923 Brunswick School District combined with LuVella District. Brunswick School was closed and LuVella School was renamed Bruella School. The county road running north and south was given the name Bruella



school, circa 1930. The students are dressed in other native customs.



▲ Teacher Miss Theo Kroeck, 1937 at Bruella School.

Photo courtesy of San Joaquin County Historical Society



▲ First grade at Bruella School, April 1940.

Photo courtesy of Beulah (Kammerer) Lewis



▲ 7th and 8th grades at Bruella School, 1947. Esther Funamisra Yniquez, Mrs. Ema Ruth (Gillette) Townsend, Mary Lou Meyers McQueen, Margie Berg Preszler, Clyde Culbertson, Beulah Kammerer Lewis, Helen Pritchard Danielson, Lucille Irwin Howarth, Leonard Geiszler, Bill Meyers, Rudy Blanco, Henry Geiszler, David Bollenger, Tom Daijogo, Suzanne Swanson Burger, Mary Ann Schwage Hudson.

Photo courtesy of Beulah (Kammerer) Lewis

Road at this time. The first trustees for Bruella School were George Schmiedt, Corral Smith, Frank Terra, Charles Black and Nelson Davis. Mrs. Anne Granlees was the first principal.

Sports, including baseball, basketball and football, were favorite activities at the school. The principal set up games with other schools just for fun. The academic portion of the school had three main courses consisting of reading, writing and arithmetic. Two electives, band and choir, were also offered. Mr. Stanley Siegfried, music teacher, would come once a week in his new Packard automobile, to teach the band and choir.

Bruella School had fundraisers to send 6th graders to Science Camp. The Spaghetti Dinner was the most profitable event. Especially popular was Bingo for the adults after dinner.

There are no records of church meetings for a number of years but minutes resumed again in January 1926. The building was being used for community events and in 1930 it was referred to as the Bruella Community Church. During the next ten years 27 members were dropped from the roll for non-attendance leaving only D.F. and Mrs. Miller, Joseph and Mrs. Utterback, Ella Stine and Mark Wade.

The trustees of the Colony Church of Christ had no by-laws or connection to any other church or organization. On May 26, 1940 the trustees met at the home of D.F. Miller. Those in attendance were D. F. Miller, Eleanor Stine, Mark Wade, clerk, all charter members and Alvin W. Braden, minister of the Lodi Christian Church. Braden was asked to attend for advice as most of the former members were attending his church. It was decided to sell the country church to the school district for \$1000. It was used for a cafeteria as well as other things.

The first generation of students either walked or rode horse and buggy to school until the late 1930's when a small school bus was available. Art Young was the schoolbus driver until

he retired in 1942. Mr. Faye Pritchard became the bus driver, janitor and groundskeeper. The bus route reached as far north as the Galt District on Collier Road. In 1952 Cora Kraemer was teaching the 5th and 6th grades. The 7th and 8th grades were taught by a man who was also the principal. Charley Black and George Schmiedt were trustees of Bruella School.

Bruella was used as a school until 1978. The 1933 earthquake in Long Beach forced the state to try to earthquake proof the old schools. After 1975, the state condemned all the old schools. Money was offered by the state to replace schools. A new school was built in Victor to replace Bruella, Alpine and Victor Schools. The next question was what to do with the Bruella building and grounds. It was suggested to make it a community center or picnic ground. The last idea was to have an agricultural spot for Lodi High School. The board of the Lodi School District approved the plan. But after proposition 13 passed the plan was placed on hold.

Early Acampo area residents started having reunions after 1957. Eighty people attended the first reunion. The second reunion, held at Micke Grove, was attended by 175. Herbert Buck, Sr. was Master of Ceremonies along with Miss Hazel Pample, Mr. & Mrs. Elmore Clancy and Mrs. Freida Nesbit.

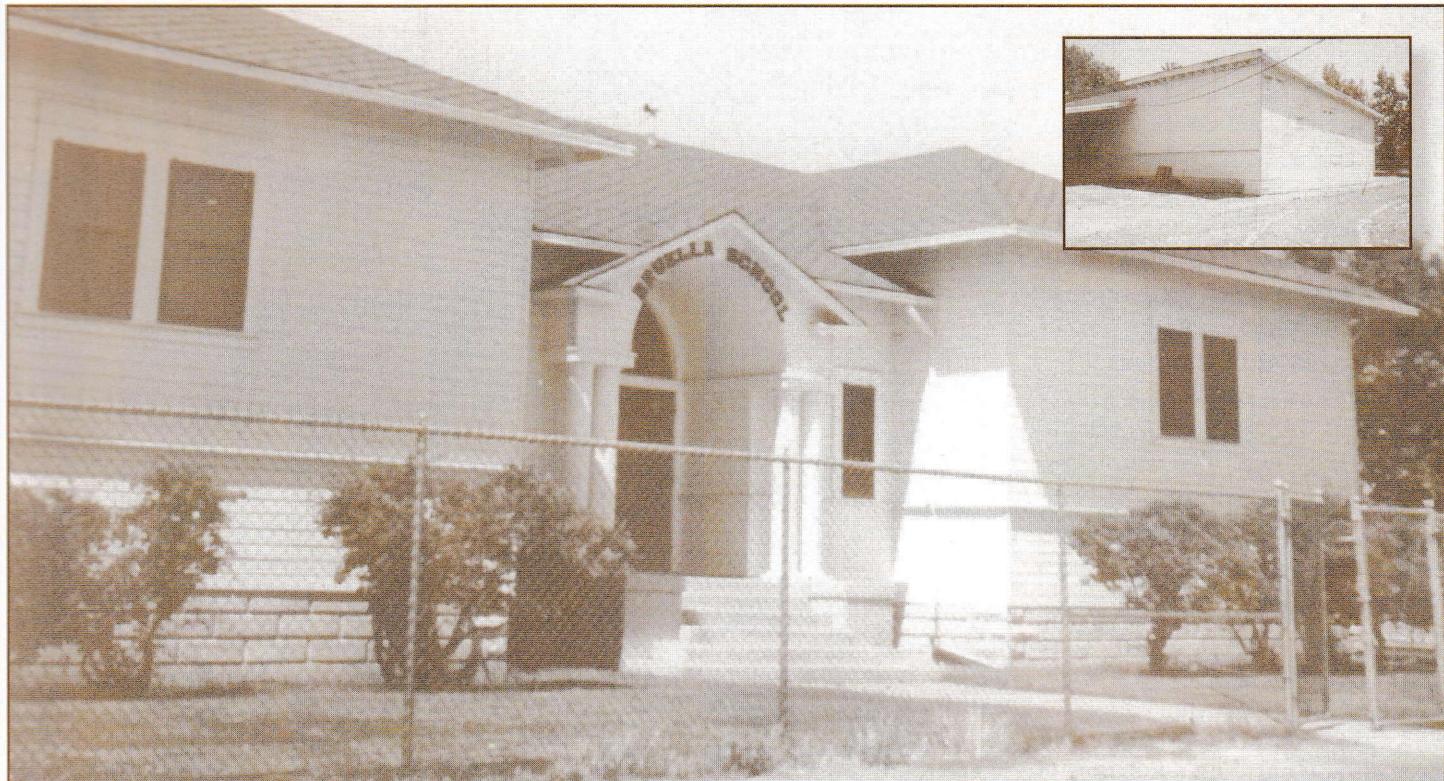
The Bruella School was allowed to weather until 1984 when the Lodi School District auctioned off the two and a half acre property, including the school and cafeteria (the former Christian Colony Church). On October 6, 1984, Maurice and Karen Kammerer, who owned the surrounding property, out-bid Mark Newfield with the high bid of \$46,000. The school building is gone but the church building still stands as a memory of an earlier time and idea.



1947 Bruella School graduation. Some of the graduates: 1st Row: Esther Funamisra Yniquez, Mrs. Ema ▲ Ruth (Gillette) Townsend. 2nd Row: Mary Lou Meyers McQueen, Margie Berg Preszler, Clyde Culbertson, Beulah Kammerer Lewis, Helen Pritchard Danielson, Lucille Irwin Howarth, Leonard Geiszler. 3rd Row: Bill Meyers, Rudy Blanco, Henry Geiszler, David Ballenger, Tom Daijogo, Suzanne Swanson Burger, Mary Ann Schwarze Hudson.
Photo courtesy of Beulah (Kammerer) Lewis



1997 Bruella 50 Year Reunion attendees include: Esther Funamisra Yniquez, Mrs. Ema Ruth (Gillette) ▲ Townsend, Mary Lou Meyers McQueen, Margie Berg Preszler, Clyde Culbertson, Beulah Kammerer Lewis, Helen Pritchard Danielson, Lucille Irwin Howarth, Leonard Geiszler, Bill Meyers, Rudy Blanco, Henry Geiszler, David Ballenger, Tom Daijogo, Suzanne Swanson Burger, Mary Ann Scharze Hudson.
Picture from Mary Masui Shimozaki, 2314 Jamestown Ct., Lodi; Courtesy of Beulah Lewis



▲ Bruella School, 1967.

Inset: Bruella School converted to storage space.
Photo courtesy of Norma Reeves



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Award Dinner, February 18, 1967, for Mark Wade Scout Master of Troop #28 from 1920 to ▲ 1942. Meetings were held weekly in the Bruella School cafeteria in the old Colony Church building. Back row: Hageo Sasaki, Jim, Sasaki, unknown, Eddie Fujitani, Lloyd Fujitani, others unknown. Bottom row: Mark Wade in center.

REFERENCES & CREDITS

Maurice and Karen Kammerer

Beulah Lewis

San Joaquin County Museum

Debbie Mastel

Acampo Christian Colony term paper by Jacqueline Stotts